



**TRANSFORM YOUR LIFE
WITH THE
BIBLE'S WAY TO WEIGHT LOSS**



FEBRUARY 2008

Matthew 6:33:
But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.



Dear Friends,

I recently attended a conference at a church in Virginia where the Pastor Steve Reynolds, lost 108 pounds and is leading his congregation to also lose weight. During the fall of 2007, his congregation lost 2100 pounds. The meeting I attended in January was the kick off for their second session where 270 men and women attended and signed up again to lose weight. Steve's alumni group is going through First Place together, which is the reason I was there.

First Place

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Carole Lewis National Director

Some of the below facts shared at that conference were sobering to say the least. This is a sad commentary for all of us as Christians.

- ? Of 100 pound losers, only one (1) out of 1,000 keeps off the weight.
- ? Christians are the most overweight people group.
- ? The word "body" is mentioned 179 times in the Bible.
- ? 66 million Americans are obese (BMI>30%).
- ? One million Americans are super obese (BMI>50%).
- ? Obesity-related health care costs 93 billion dollars annually.
- ? Obesity is the major cause of 30 medical conditions annually.
- ? 70% of cardio vascular disease is obesity related.
- ? Obese people have two (2) times the risk for high blood pressure.
- ? Obesity is the leading cause of elevated cholesterol and triglycerides.
- ? People with a BMI >20% have 2x the risk of arthritis.
- ? People with a BMI >40% have 4x the risk of arthritis.
- ? Obesity is the leading cause of sudden cardiac death.

As I listened to these statistics, I was saddened to think about how many of the churches in America are full of men and women suffering from the above listed conditions.

(Continued on page 2)





Continued from page 1

First Place has many dramatic testimonies of men and women who have reversed serious health problems by learning to eat healthfully and starting a regular exercise program. We can turn these statistics around if we are willing to ask Jesus for the help we so desperately need. Most of us have tried on our own to lose weight only to regain everything we lost, plus some. God wants to heal His people; our job is to ask for His help. **I don't know about you, but I plan to lose weight in 2008! Let's do it to bring honor and glory to God.**

Do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own, you are brought at a price. Therefore, honor God with your body.
1 Corinthians 6:19-20

Carole Lewis

First Place National Director

***Don't miss Coffee with Carole at Bethany Church in Greenland, NH on March 10, 2008. For information, contact Delilah Dirksen at djdirksen@comcast.net.**

Events Coming Soon!

Area Leaders Meeting

February 24, 2008
Hanford First Baptist Church
Hanford, CA
Contact: Jeanette Highfill
Phone: 559-289-3447
Email: jhighfill4@sbcglobal.net

Area Leader's Meeting

March 15, 2008
Farmborough Heights,
New South Wales, Australia
Contact: Barb Lukies
Email: firstplaceaustralia@yahoo.com.au
Phone: (0242)718800

Coffee with Carole

March 10, 2008
9:00 AM – 12:00
Sheraton Harborside
Portsmouth, NH
Continental Snack and special music too!
Limited Seating
Cost: \$15
Contact: Delilah Dirksen
Email: djdirksen@comcast.net

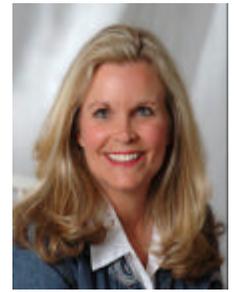
Area Leader's Meeting

June 28, 2008
Farmborough Heights,
New South Wales, Australia
Contact: Barb Lukies
Email: firstplaceaustralia@yahoo.com.au
Phone: (0242)718800





Leadership Training



Vicki Heath
vicki.heath@firstplace.org

What a Loser!

Steve Reynolds is just that! And now he is leading his whole church to be a bunch of losers too! Over a year ago, Pastor Steve realized that because of his lust of the flesh (For him it was over indulging in ice cream!) and sedentary lifestyle, he was digging his own grave with a knife and fork! He decided to do something about it and has lost 108 pounds. And that was just the beginning! This past year he led a church-wide weight loss competition in his church, Capital Baptist in Annandale, VA. Approximately 250 members responded, followed his example, and lost a total of 2100 pounds in one year!

Carole Lewis, Erin DuBroc and I had the pleasure of speaking at his second Losing to Live weight loss campaign, which was launched January 19, 2008, and I was able to hear first hand his remarkable story. Let me share with you what I really like about what Steve had to say:

- ? You don't have to join a gym to exercise.
- ? It will take you about a year.
- ? It can be simple - eat less, exercise more.

It really can be just as simple as that! That is not all he shared. Steve shared the story of his "growth" in ministry with a slide show of pictures, starting with how he looked graduating from seminary. He shared different pictures from the past 18 years reflecting the weight he put on while he was busy growing the church and ministering to others. His final picture showed him weighing around 340 pounds just two years ago.

He admitted he was one of the biggest hypocrites in the world, but the church apparently was okay with that. He said, "If I taught evolution, do you think they (the church) would have let me continue preaching? No way, they would fire me!" But they had no problem with him being a 340 pound Diabetic, preaching week after week. What is going on with the church? Have we forgotten that we are "...the temple of the Holy Spirit;...we are not our own, we have been bought with a price..." I Corinthians 6:19-20? I think Steve's observation accurately reflects the church's attitude toward obesity. We as Southern Baptists refer to a lot of our preachers as "big ole' boys" and we joke about it. But it's not funny. Of all the special populations in our country, Christians lead in obesity, and of the Christian groups, Southern Baptists are the heaviest. We are spending millions of dollars each year on diseases that can be prevented.

I really appreciated Steve's honest, but non-judgmental, assessment of his own personal state of affairs with regard to his health. Steve has written a book *Bod4God* that tells his complete story. His weight loss competition is called Losing to Live and this year they have gone one step farther. They are incorporating First Place and First Place Bible studies in their campaign. Thank you, Steve, for reminding us to lead by losing! Way to go Pastor!

New Year's Blessings,

Vicki Heath





Balanced Living – Emotional

Cut the Bitter Root



Bill Heston
bheston@fpchouston.org

Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord. See to it that no one misses the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many. Hebrews 12:14-15

It is impossible to live very long before hurtful things happen. Some we just stumble into and others seem to be well-conceived plots. Even good people end up hurting other good people. Apologies are welcomed, but they do not take away the harm that often has been done. Some hurts are subtle and others are obvious and often irreparable. Christians are not immune to wounds from others. We hurt and require healing. But to be a whole and balanced believer, we must seek healing which also includes forgiveness.

Forgiveness does not mean that we minimize the damage and pretend that hurtful behavior is not hurtful. It means we will not be poisoned by life's circumstances and we will not make our relationship with others sick. We may feel a right to hold on to angry or bitter feelings but with that right comes the fruit it produces.

Bitterness often grows in the fertile soil of anger and feelings of injustice. The healthy initial reaction may be anger or deep sadness, but when it consumes us, we will produce its bitter and poisonous fruit.

Bitter Fruit

- ? Consumed by past hurt
- ? Avoidance/isolation
- ? Depression
- ? Anger
- ? Spiritual doubt
- ? Outburst or overreaction
- ? Regret
- ? Overly sensitive – suspicious
- ? Resentment
- ? Conflict

Healthy Fruit

- ? Lower blood pressure
- ? Lower heart rate
- ? Eating – balanced not *over* or *under* eating
- ? Personal relationships
- ? Better decisions
- ? Work relationships
- ? Spiritual growth
- ? Stress reduction
- ? Help with compulsive disorders
- ? Help with many depression symptoms

Putting the benefits ahead of vengeance is what we are called to do. The results are life giving: physically, relationally and spiritually. It may take some pruning of the damage, seeking those with skills to help with the healing and maybe some new fresh soil – positive nutrients from supportive healthy Christian friends.

It is not just a good idea – it can be life and death.

Dr. Bill Heston

Dr Bill Heston is Associate Pastor at First Presbyterian Church of Houston and is Licensed in Marriage and Family Therapy.





Balanced Living - Physical

One Step at a Time



Jeannie Blocher
jeannie@bodyandsoul.org

Is exercise one of the hardest things for you when it comes to healthy lifestyle changes? If your answer is yes, you are not alone. Many people feel the same way. There are so many things that seem to happen in life that sabotage our efforts to exercise. We have to find time to do it, and our lives are busy. We have to be willing to sweat and that makes us uncomfortable. We have to find a place to do it, and we have to find a mode of exercise that works for us. These are challenges, and the challenges are real, but with God’s help, we can take one step at a time to add exercise to our health habits! It doesn’t matter whether you made resolutions or whether you didn’t. Today you can take your first step.

I suggest that your first step is prayer. Ask the Lord to help you turn sabotage into success. He can make you an overcomer in this area of life! Ask Him to help you take negative thoughts captive and change your thinking about exercise. Ask Him to show you a way to be more active that will work in your life. Ask him for a friend who will exercise with you. Pray with a friend about it!

Then the next step is to take the *first* step and, as Nike says, “just do it.” Go for a walk and don’t worry how short or how long it is. Just put on those tennis shoes and do something active. And notice, Nike doesn’t say “just *like* it”—it’s about action. It’s ok that you may not like it at first; in fact, you may never really like to exercise, but as you make it a life habit, you will reap the positive results for your health, and you will *like* that!

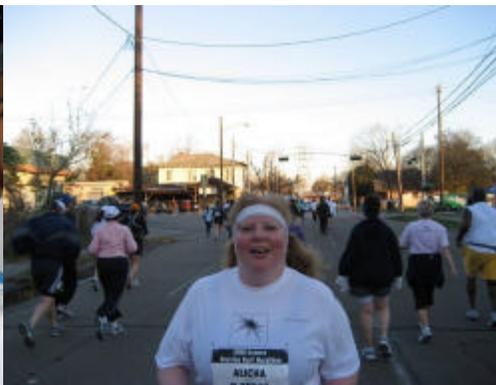
And don’t forget the final step each day—thank God that you were able to do it. Ask Him to help you do it again the next day. Trust Him to be your fitness partner. He will never leave you or forsake you.

Mailbag

Three members of a First Place class at Houston’s First Baptist Church participated in the Chevron Houston Marathon on January 13, 2008. This was their first Half Marathon event. Way to go!



Susan Meriwether



Alicha Vermillion



Melinda Bliler

Sent in by Claudia Korff, First Place Leader
Houston’s First Baptist Church
Houston, TX



Nutrition Notes

The (not so) Secret to Sticking With It



Erin DuBroc
erin.dubroc@firstplace.org

I read a great article in Newsweek by Dr. Dean Ornish, M.D. a few months ago. Entitled “Forget about Willpower”, I was quite curious to read what Dr. Ornish believes one *shouldn't* forget about in the quest for successful weight loss since willpower is, after all, believed by many to be a large piece of the weight-loss puzzle. You can find the article here: <http://www.newsweek.com/id/81153>.

Once you read it, I hope you'll see some major similarities between what Dr. Ornish touts as the secrets to losing weight and what First Place teaches. The main ideas I took from the article were that if people desire weight loss success, they need to (1) develop more constructive coping skills – namely ones that don't involve food, (2) change their mindset about healthy eating, (3) accept that food is just food (not “good” or “bad”), (4) make authentic changes perpetuated by our own motivation, not the motivation of others, and last but certainly not least, (5) adopt an overall healthy lifestyle of eating, complete with balance and moderation.

Constructive Coping Skills, Got Any?

When Dr. Ornish's friend, Woody, found that managing stress with things other than food worked for him (and his waistline), he uncovered a powerful skill that all successful losers must learn. Simply, food can't be your comforter, but many other things can. Food serves only one fundamental purpose – to keep you alive and in good health. Sure, we can enjoy it and savor foods we love, but there is a fine line between enjoyment and codependency.

It's All in Your Mind

The way we view eating healthy has a lot to do with whether or not we actually embrace it. If you want to stick with it, try viewing it as delicious, adventurous, empowering, abundant, attainable, legalism-free, juicy, savory, and fun! The longer you view it as drudgery, the sooner you'll quit. Dr. Ornish put it best when he wrote, “If we understand that what we gain is so much more than what we give up, then it doesn't feel like a sacrifice. If it's fun, then it's sustainable.”

Food is Just Food – Really!

Gone are the days where foods are categorized into the “good” or “bad” piles. That faulty line of thinking may still pervade pop culture, but as far as First Place goes – it's old and worthless news. Food is just food, but it's the labels we assign it that make it beneficial or detrimental to our health. For example, if I assign rich desserts with “stress-relieving”, I run the serious risk of living out of balance with regards to my food choices. However, if I label them as “delicious occasional treat”, I understand that they are not forbidden, not “bad”, but a treat that has a proper place as “occasional” in my diet.

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What Do YOU Want?

I can plead with someone for hours as to why eating well and exercising is essential to their health. I can give them the best information available as to why it is worth their while with the most passion-filled delivery I can muster. But, if someone hasn't come to the conclusion that they want eating well and exercise for themselves for a personal and meaningful reason, I am just another person prodding and pushing them a few steps down a road where they're not even sure they want to be. What are your personal and meaningful reasons for wanting to be healthy? To live long for your kids? To enjoy an active life with your spouse? To testify to others of God's sovereignty in your life? To simply improve your mood and outlook on life? Determine what it is that will motivate you and hold on tight. Rebellion will rear its ugly head often, but if you have more than willpower holding you to the fire, you're more likely to emerge victorious.

Moderation is Extreme-free

It's official! "Studies have shown that those who eat the healthiest overall are the ones who allow themselves some indulgences. People have different needs, goals, and preferences." On the extreme-diet spectrum, there are three behaviors:

DEPRIVATION ----- MODERATION ----- GLUTTONY

Choosing to live a life of balance that manifests itself in moderation is such a weapon in your war against the other two. There is also a more constructive way of thinking of food. Not good or bad, but on a continuum describing their place in our diets: often, occasional, and seldom. All foods can have a place in a healthy diet, but not all should have a *prominent* place.

Lastly, I agree with Dr. Ornish when he says, "How much you want to move to the healthier end of the spectrum, and how quickly, is up to you. To the degree that you move in a healthful direction...you're likely to look better, feel better, lose weight, and gain health." I couldn't have said it better myself!

To good health,

Erin DuBroc, MPH, RD, LD





Success Story Update!



- ✍ 163+ pounds lost!
- ✍ Read through the Bible twice.
- ✍ Many First Place Bible studies completed.
- ✍ So much water...so much exercise.

This is what God has done for me. Where I am, where I was, where I could be. God is so good! He is blessing my life daily in so many ways. I asked for help and there He was. I needed His help in my relationships, finances, health, home, family, work, and there He was. He has always been here; I just didn't recognize Him completely.

I'm not there yet. God is working on me every day. I get into such a mess sometimes, but God helps me get things back in order daily. Walking with Him is such a blessing and adventure. I pray for ways to share Him daily and get such joy in telling what the Lord is doing in my life.

I have been on what the hospital calls the Healthy Employee program for six months. I just completed it and want to share where God has taken me. My cholesterol is 135, triglycerides 47, fasting glucose 80. My body composition has gone from 17.8% body fat to 13.9% in 6 months. This (praise God) puts me in the national 92% or excellent range. But I'm still not where I want to be! I don't know what my weight should be yet, but I do want to lose 2 to 4 more inches in my waist. It will happen! I never had the patience that God has given me for this until this session. I don't have to be perfect; I can't be perfect. But when I stumble or when I fall, God is right here picking me up again.

I'm praying for the peace of God for all of you. I pray for success in your life. Struggle is vital; I believe God demands we do our part, but God wants us to succeed and He is right here to help.

Don Steffey
Murray, KY

*See Don's original testimony at <http://www.firstplace.org/success6.html>.





Devotional

Clueless and Busy in Illinois

Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.

COLOSSIANS 3:1-2

I became aware of the hectic nature of my life when I found myself dyeing my hair at midnight! The 20 minutes I had forced myself to stay awake so that I could cover the gray, I had just enough reflection time to day, “My life has been w-a-y too busy for the last week.”

I should have had a clue on Sunday when I left for church at 8:00 a.m. didn’t look at the time again until I unglued myself from my computer at 9 p.m. That was my day of rest, the Lord’s Day. I should have had a clue, but I didn’t because that is what busyness does--it keeps us clueless in a life void of reflection, quiet, and undisturbed time with God.

But, hey, after all, it was only for a week, and I was doing really important stuff! I was able to keep up with my e-mail and phone messages, go to my appointments, finish my projects, and run errands for my kids. So, what got shorted?

Well, I fell asleep during prayer, “glanced” at my husband, ignored my Bible study, gobbled junk food suppers, and reduced my sleep to deprivation levels. So I didn’t hurt anything other than my spiritual, emotional, relational, and physical well being!

PRAYER

Lord, help me to see my life from your perspective. Slow me down when busyness threatens to sabotage Your plan for me, Father.

Journal: Write down two things that you can let go of today in order to have more quiet time with God.

Barb Lee, First Place Leader
Normal, IL

Taken from *Living Well*, new First Place devotional book. To order, call 1-800-4GOSPEL.





Tortellini Soup

Serves 6

- 2 1/2 cups water
- 2 14-1/2-ounce can diced tomatoes, undrained
- 2 cups reduced-sodium chicken broth
- 1/2 teaspoon dried basil, crushed
- 1/4 teaspoon dried oregano, crushed
- 1/2 teaspoon pepper
- 4 cups loose-pack frozen broccoli, cauliflower and carrots
- 2 1/2 cups refrigerated cheese tortellini
- 1 1/2 tablespoon snipped fresh parsley

In a medium saucepan, combine the water, undrained tomatoes, chicken broth, basil, oregano and pepper. Bring to boiling. Stir in frozen vegetables and tortellini. Return to boiling; reduce heat. Simmer, uncovered, for 5 to 6 minutes or until tortellini are tender. Add parsley and serve.

Exchanges: 2 Breads, 1 1/2 Meats, 1 1/2 Vegetables

Creamed Turkey with Bow Ties

Serves 6

- 1 (12 ounce) package bow tie pasta
- 1 bunch green onions, chopped
- 6 celery ribs, chopped
- 1/2 pound fresh mushrooms, sliced
- 2 tablespoons butter or stick margarine
- 2 1/2 cups cubed cooked turkey breast
- 1 (14.5 ounce) can chicken broth
- 1 (10.75 ounce) can reduced-fat, reduced-sodium cream of mushroom soup, undiluted
- 1/4 cup fat-free sour cream
- pepper to taste

Cook pasta according to package directions. Meanwhile saute onions, celery and mushrooms in butter until tender. Reduce heat. Add the turkey, broth, soup and sour cream; heat through (do not boil). Season with pepper. Drain pasta; top with turkey mixture.

Note: Can use a bag of veggies in place of the mushrooms.

Exchanges: 2 1/2 meats, 2 Breads

Apricot Glazed Asparagus

Serves 4

- 1 pound asparagus spears, trimmed
- Cooking spray
- 2 tablespoons apricot preserves
- 1 tablespoon low-sodium soy sauce
- 1/4 teaspoon minced garlic
- 1/8 teaspoon salt

Preheat oven to 400°. Place asparagus spears on a jelly roll pan lined with foil and coated with cooking spray. Combine apricot preserves, soy sauce, garlic, and salt and pour over asparagus. Toss well to coat. Bake at 400° for 10 minutes or until asparagus is crisp-tender. Serve immediately.

Exchanges: 1/2 vegetable

Green Beans with Chives

Serves 4

- 1 pound fresh green beans, trimmed
- 1 tablespoon chopped fresh chives
- 1 tablespoon chopped fresh parsley
- 2 teaspoons butter
- 1/2 teaspoon stone-ground mustard
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1/8 teaspoon pepper

Steam green beans, covered, 5 minutes or until crisp-tender. Remove from steamer; toss with remaining ingredients.

Exchanges: 1 1/2 vegetables, 1/2 fat